

Title: The Intersection of Genderlects and National Culture Communication in the American L1/Russian L2 Classroom
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Among foreign language teachers, the cross-cultural dimensions of adult learning are widely recognized as influential in creating best educational practices for adults. To increase teaching effectiveness, we must not only examine the culture “out there” but also consider the topic of cross-gender communication and the sociolinguistic aspect of Russian native-speaker teachers and American adult students.

This paper posits that learning at all proficiency levels can be improved through sensitivity to general differences in communication across cultures and the culture-specific features of cross-gender interaction, and appropriate explicit metalinguistic training about these differences.

In comparing Russian and American communication by students of both genders, the American and Russian modes frequently align with feminine and masculine genderlects respectively. The two national-cultural modes are not always clearly juxtaposed along gender lines. For example, where the American mode is generally more “masculine” (e.g., valuing brevity in turn-taking and allowing long pauses in dialogue), the Russian mode is more “feminine” (e.g., no limits are placed on the length of each interlocutor’s turn, and long pauses in dialogue are unacceptable). Also notable is the reaction to females whose speech exhibits masculine genderlect features. Modern, successful Russian women tend to show more masculine genderlect traits than their male counterparts, leading to a negative perception of their speech behavior. These features might be considered positive in a professional atmosphere for American women and thus constitute a complicating factor in the Russian L2 classroom.

The American-culture emphasis on independence and individuality and the Russian-culture stress on interdependence are reflected in the structure of their respective languages. Given learners’ patterns of cultural and linguistic concept-mapping, the language of communication may not matter as much as the interlocutors’ countries of origin and their ideas about communication. Thus, both verbal and non-verbal communication factors might lead to sociolinguistic and cultural faux amis.